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ABSTRACT

The National Council of La Raza launched Project Excellence in Community Educational Leadership (EXCEL), in 1985 to contribute experiences and input from the community level to the school reform process and to address some of the short-term needs of the students currently enrolled. Project EXCEL, which is designed to help Hispanic American community-based organizations become effective partners with the schools, was launched to improve Hispanic American educational opportunities and achievement through the development and testing of low-cost, replicable community-based education models and complementary applied research, policy analysis, and dissemination of information about the educational status and needs of Hispanic Americans. In spite of a consistent pattern of undereducation and the rapid growth of Hispanic Americans as a proportion of the school population, educational policies and programs continue to be developed and implemented with little attention to their needs. The following six models have been developed by Project EXCEL: (1) Academia del Pueblo, supplemental education for elementary school children; (2) Project Success for middle school or junior high school youth; (3) Project Second Chance, a program to attract those who have left school without a diploma; (4) Parents as Partners, a parenting program; (5) Family Reading Program, a literacy program for parents and children; and (6) the Teacher Support Network for teacher education for those working with Hispanic children. In the second year of a 5-year demonstration project, 26 sites are running 42 separate programs based on these models. (SLD)

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Project EXCEL

A National Hispanic Organization seeks to improve the American educational system for Hispanic children.

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The American educational system is often portrayed as a pipeline, successfully transporting individuals from childhood to college or the work. However, it is increasingly clear that this "pipeline" more closely resembles a sieve where Hispanic children are concerned. Hispanics slip out of this pipeline at disproportionately high rates. From kindergarten through college, proportionately fewer Hispanics than either Blacks or Whites are enrolled in school, and those who are enrolled are often prepared for very different futures than non-Hispanic children. (See Figure 1.)

Because of its concern about Hispanic undereducation, in 1985 the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) launched Project EXCEL, which stands for Excellence in Community Educational Leadership. Project EXCEL was developed both to contribute experiences and input from the community level to the school reform process and to address some of the short-term needs of students currently enrolled in school systems unresponsive to those needs. It was designed to help Hispanic community-based organizations become effective partners with the schools, tapping their unique ability to combine social service approaches with educational programming for students and families that schools have traditionally had difficulty serving well.

The Educational Status Of Hispanics

Hispanics are the youngest, fastest growing, and most undereducated major American subgroup. (See Sidebar on "Workforce 2000.") Dropout rates for Hispanics are much higher than those for either Blacks or Whites, ranging from 35 to 80 percent depending upon the community; nationally about half of Mexican American and Puerto Rican youth leave school without a diploma. College completion rates for Hispanics are low as well: only 10 percent of Hispanic 25 years of age and over had completed college in 1988 compared to 21 percent of non-Hispanics.

National studies and local experience document several particularly critical points at which Hispanic children fall through the pipeline. A higher percentage of Hispanic children are enrolled below grade level than are non-Hispanics, a particularly disturbing statistic since early school failure is perhaps the greatest predictor of a child's later dropping out of school. In high school, Hispanics are disproportionately enrolled in general and vocational educational tracks, both of which make college enrollment unlikely.

Moreover, two groups which should be helping students, teachers and parents, are also experiencing problems. English illiteracy among Hispanic adults, which has been reported as high as 56 percent, makes it difficult for Hispanic parents to be effective participants in their children's education. There are few Hispanics in the nations's teaching force (only 2.6 percent of elementary school teachers and 1.7 percent of secondary school teachers) and a similarly small proportion among administrators (2 percent of principals) and guidance counselors (2.7 percent). Thus, there are few role models among school personnel and few persons who are intimately familiar with the Spanish language and the cultures of Hispanic children.

Despite the consistent pattern of undereducation and the rapid growth of Hispanics as a proportion of the school population, educational policies and programs continue to be developed and implemented with scant attention to the needs of Hispanics and with relatively little effort to use community resources. If this situation is to change, effective, low-cost community-based educational efforts must be available to supplement what public and parochial schools are able to do for Hispanic children, their parents, and the teachers serving them. Moreover, such local efforts must be paired with national education policy initiatives which provide policy makers at the federal, state, and local levels with timely, fact-based analyses on the educational needs of Hispanics and the likely effects of various policy alternatives on this community.

NCLR believes that fundamental changes in the philosophy, structure, and practices of schooling are necessary if the public schools are to do a better job of educating Hispanic and other minority group

Lori Orum is Director of Project EXCEL and Lisa Navarrete is Director of Public Information, both for the National Council of La Raza.

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Hispanics—the youngest, fastest growing, and most undereducated demographic group in the U.S.—are expected to be our largest minority group by the middle of the next century.

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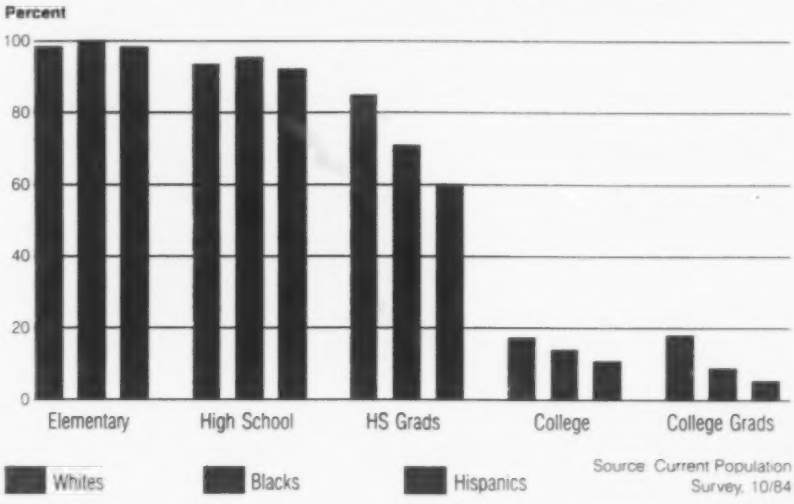
students. Equity and excellence in education must be viewed as twin and inseparable goals. However, given the resistance to change inherent in most bureaucratic systems, systematic restructuring of the schools must be realistically viewed as a critical but long-term objective.

Figure 1

Educational Pipeline: Participation Rates by Race and Ethnicity



The Barriers To Equity and Excellence

While some school districts, or—more commonly—individual schools, are highly effective in meeting the needs of Hispanic students, the majority can be more fairly described as "underachieving" schools. These are the schools which most Hispanic students attend. Either through lack of will, training, or resources (or some combination thereof), these schools have not succeeded well in providing an equitable and excellent education for their Hispanic students.

Even when commitment is high, sufficient resources are available, and teachers and administrators are willing to tinker with the structure of the school, the schools face a formidable challenge in effectively serving Hispanic students and their families. Bilingual personnel are in notoriously short supply in most schools, and the shortage of bilingual counselors, psychologists, health personnel, and parent outreach workers is even more pronounced.

The segmented nature of public education also makes it difficult for schools to plan for or coordinate family-wide learning programs. Few elementary and secondary schools are able to offer education and training to parents either to help them become partners in their children's education or to upgrade their own skills. Adult education programs are generally not connected to programs serving children, and most concentrate on the basic educational skills necessary for parents to learn English or secure General Education Development certificates, rather than skills which might help them help their children with school. Those parent programs which are run through elementary and secondary schools are too often viewed as a "frill," and when budgets must be cut, they are usually among the first casualties.

Few schools have the resources to address the non-academic needs of students and their families, although those needs can frequently interfere with a student's ability to be an effective learner. Lack of affordable and safe housing, unemployment, emergency cash needs for food and heat, lack of affordable health care, and needs for counseling or assistance in times of crisis can all cause formidable barriers to education for low-income Hispanic families.

Although several approaches have been developed in recent years to try to pull together community resources to meet these needs for students, few schools have discovered or utilized a valuable resource that already exists in many Hispanic communities—Hispanic community-based organizations, or CBOs. These organizations have several advantages in reaching Hispanic families, especially low-income, non-English-speaking families. They are located in the community, are staffed by bilingual personnel, and generally offer a variety of services which are used by low-income, limited-English proficient parents. These organizations are designed to serve the very people the schools have often had difficulty reaching—the poor, the non-English speaking, the recent immigrant, and families in crisis.

Project EXCEL

Originally known as the Innovative Education Project, Project EXCEL was launched in 1985 to improve Hispanic educational opportunities and achievement through the devel-

opment and testing of low-cost, replicable community-based education models, and complementary applied research, policy analysis, and dissemination of information about the educational status and needs of Hispanics. Three of the six models since developed are designed to address the school-age populations that both national research and local community experience indicate are among the most educationally "at-risk." The remaining three models address the needs of parents and teachers, whose informed assistance is essential to improve children's educational outcomes. Currently, Project EXCEL is in the second year of implementation of a five-year demonstration project. This program year, 26 sites are running 42 separate programs.

Spencer Grant/Unophoto

Academia del Pueblo

The Academia del Pueblo model addresses the problems of early academic failure and grade retention faced by many Hispanic children in elementary school. After-school and summer "academies" are established to provide reinforcement and supplemental educational assistance to help children meet and exceed grade promotion requirements in elementary school. During the school year the program can be offered from two to five afternoons per week, depending on local resources and needs.

Children may be recommended for the Academia by either parents or teachers, and teacher assessment of areas in which a child needs additional skills are solicited. While the programs typically charge a very minimal fee for participation, the real "cost" to the parent is time for parental involvement. A parent contract is required for each child, stipulating that the parent will attend at least 50 percent of the monthly parent education activities, read with the child at home for a contracted amount of time (or, in the case of parents with limited reading skills, have the child read aloud to the parent), establish and enforce rules for homework and school attendance, review and sign

From kindergarten through college, proportionately fewer Hispanics than either Blacks or Whites are enrolled in school.

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the child's homework, and ensure that the child has a library card.

Instruction for the children centers around language arts and reading (English as a Second Language where necessary), mathematics and problem solving skills, and enrichment activities such as computer education and, in some sites, Spanish. Instruction is provided by teachers (the head teacher is to be a certified teacher experienced in working with Hispanic children) and cross-age tutors. The core curriculum for the project makes use of cooperative learning techniques and a student writing project which links students with a "sister" site in another community. The belief that all the children can learn given the appropriate instruction is the credo of the program.

Some of the sites where Academia del Pueblo is being implemented this program year include El Comite Hispano and United Community Ministries in cooperation with Fairfax County Schools, Fairfax County, Virginia; Friendly House, Phoenix, Arizona; Guadalupe Center, Kansas City, Missouri; and the United Community Center, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The College of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota, is developing a project for a spring or summer start.

Project Success

Project Success is designed primarily to help Hispanic youth in middle or junior high schools increase their high school completion and college entrance rates by providing them with academic enrichment, career and academic counseling, and other special opportunities. In most cases, the project is specifi-

Academia del Pueblo helps elementary school students keep up with their non-Hispanic classmates by providing instruction in after-school and summer "academies."

WORKFORCE 2000: THE URGENT NEED FOR HISPANIC INVOLVEMENT

When the National Council of La Raza began to serve the Hispanic community, there were 9.1 million Hispanics in the United States according to the 1970 Census. As of March of 1989, there were 20.1 million Hispanics in the United States. The tremendous growth has been one of the most dramatic demographic phenomena of the last decade. While the population at large grew by 7 percent in the 1980s, Hispanics grew by over a third since 1980. Hispanics now constitute 8.1 percent of the total U.S. population and are expected to be the largest minority in the U.S. by the middle of the next century.

The vast majority of Hispanics, 62.3 percent, are of Mexican descent, followed by Puerto Ricans (12.7 percent), Central and South Americans (11.5 percent) and Cubans (5.3 percent). While there are Hispanics in every state, the population remains highly concentrated geographically. Fifty-five percent of all Hispanics live in Texas and California, and 89 percent live in those two states plus New York, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New Mexico, Arizona, and Colorado. Hispanics are also the youngest major subpopulation. The median age for Hispanics is 25.1 years compared to 32.6 for non-Hispanics.

Economically, Hispanics are not faring as well as non-Hispanics. For much of the 1980s, Hispanic unemployment rates were in the double digits. Their unemployment rate tends to be almost two-thirds higher than the rate for whites. Moreover, Hispanics tend to be concentrated in low-skill, low-paying occupations such as laborers, operators, and fabricators, and they are less likely than non-Hispanics to hold managerial, professional, or technical jobs.

Nonetheless, Hispanics have very high labor force participation rates. In 1988, 65 percent of Hispanics were in the labor force compared to 64.5 percent of non-Hispanics. Seventy nine percent of Hispanic men are in the labor force compared to 74 percent of non-Hispanic men. Only Hispanic women have lower labor force participation rates than their counterparts, 52 percent versus 55.7 percent, but this rate has increased from 48 percent in 1982.

Despite such high labor force participation rates, Hispanic median family income is lower than that for non-Hispanics. The average Hispanic household income is $20,300 compared to $31,600 for non-Hispanic families. In fact, 25.8 percent of Hispanic families live below the poverty level, two-and-a-half times the rate for non-Hispanic families. Thus, Hispanics are over-represented among the working poor.

Clearly, the growing Hispanic population presents a challenge to America. In its 1987 study of the future of the American economy, *Workforce 2000*, the Department of Labor stated that one of the major challenges for policy makers was to integrate Black and Hispanic workers fully into the economy. It noted "the shrinking numbers of young people, the rapid pace of industrial change, and the ever-rising skill requirements of the emerging economy make the task of fully utilizing minority workers particularly urgent between now and 2000." While the population at large will grow slowly, non-whites will make up 29 percent of new entrants into the workforce, twice their current share of the workforce.

However, the study warns that minority workers are less likely to have the education or job training these new jobs required. The report concludes that it is time to begin investing in education, training, and other assistance to ensure a qualified workforce for 2000 and beyond.

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cally concerned with equipping youth with the skills and interest to enroll and succeed in college-preparatory curriculum tracks when they reach high school. It is designed to operate from two to five days per week after school and in the summers, depending on local resources. Project Success offers academic instruction and career awareness and personal development activities since youth need to be not only encouraged but also enabled.

While the research literature and all the communities included in the project to date have identified middle school/junior high school as a critical point for intervention, the model does not have to be used exclusively for that age group. Project Success may also be used with younger or older students if the aim is to increase academic success, reduce limiting curriculum tracking, lead to higher rates of high school graduation, and increase the possibility of post-secondary education and/or training. In fact, several of this year's program sites work with high school youth, and one serves youth preparing to enter junior high.

As in the Academia, referral may come from parents or teachers and participation requires both a signed parent contract and a teacher assessment. However, given the much higher level of choice available to adolescents—who typically vote with their feet—the programs must also reflect student-perceived needs and design activities to meet the interests of the young people.

Because many of the students participating in Project Success will be the products of low-level ability tracks, the projects are to pay particular attention to the development of higher-order thinking and analytic skills and problem-solving skills in math rather than simply computation skills. They are also asked to employ cooperative learning techniques whenever possible.

Curricula available through NCLR reflect these needs. Through a partnership with Time, Inc., one local project uses the

One of the aims of Project Success is to boost Hispanics' college entrance rates by offering career and academic counseling. Here, high school students participate in Career Day.

The National Council of La Raza (NCLR) is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving life opportunities for the nearly 20 million Americans of Hispanic descent. Incorporated in Arizona in 1968 as the Southwest Council of La Raza, NCLR served as an incubator for emerging Mexican American organizations in the area, organizations such as Chicanos Por La Causa in Phoenix and the Mexican American Unity Council in San Antonio. In the 1970s, NCLR began providing technical assistance to its affiliates to develop programs in areas like housing, community development, and education. It now serves over 116 affiliates in 32 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

Providing capacity-building assistance to Hispanic community-based organizations is just one of NCLR's missions. In addition, NCLR is also working to make Hispanic concerns a part of the national policy agenda through its Office of Research, Advocacy, and Legislation. NCLR's Policy Analysis Center was established in 1980 to serve as a "think tank" on public policy issues concerning Hispanics and to provide information based on applied research and analysis for public and private-sector policy makers and for use by the Hispanic community and the media. Among priority issues for NCLR are education, immigration, housing, civil rights, the elderly, and poverty.

NCLR also carries out catalytic and collaborative special and international activities which meet Hispanic needs through its Office of Special and International Projects, which includes the National Farmworker Center. Through media activities, NCLR also works to educate opinion leaders and the public about Hispanic needs and concerns as well as the many contributions Hispanics have made to American society.

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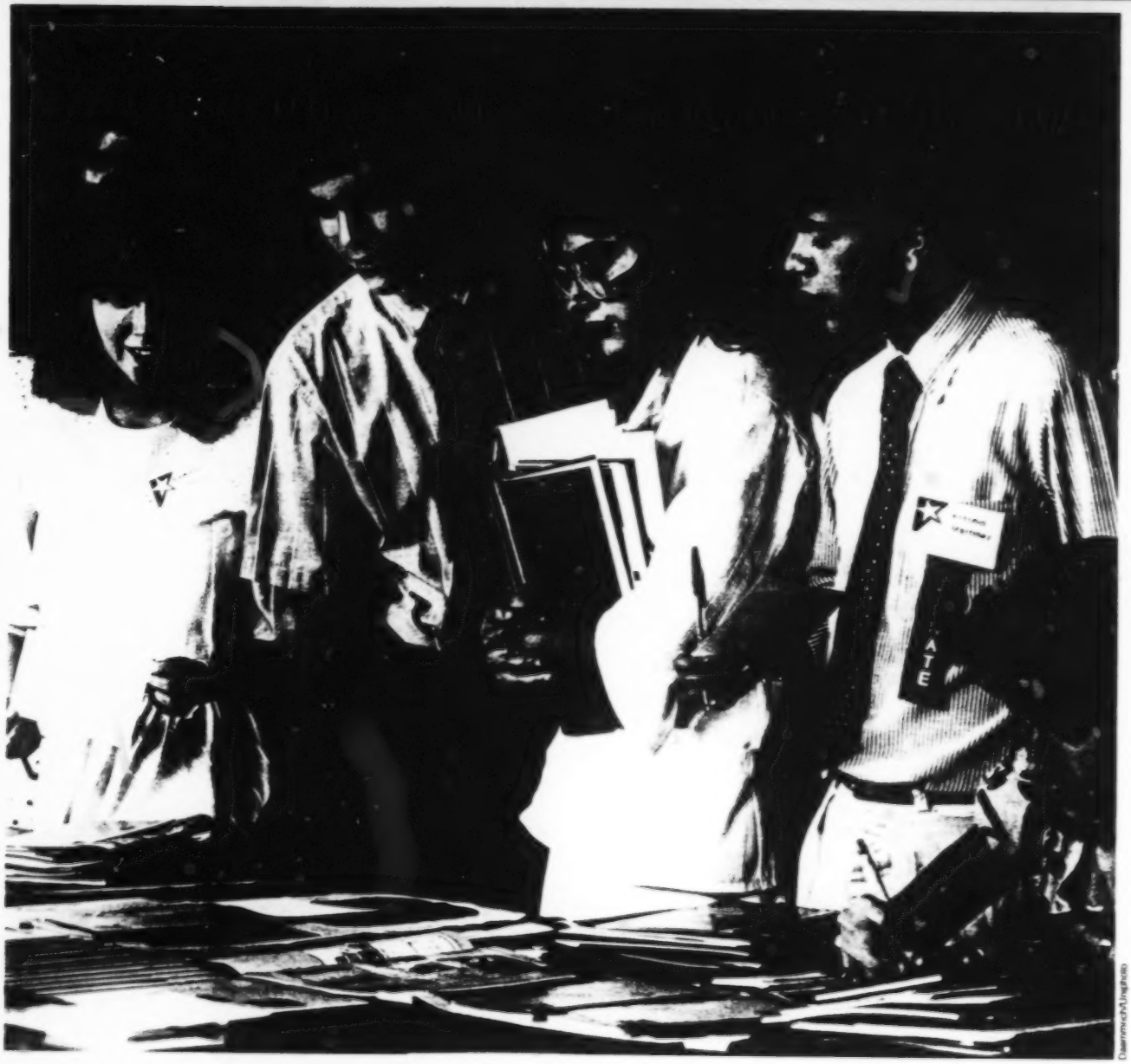

"Time to Read" program as a part of its efforts. The program uses high interest materials, features small "study group" style instruction, involves adults from local businesses who also serve as role models and sources of information about the world of work, and provides students with their own subscriptions to magazines—ensuring that high-interest reading materials are available at home. (Three other "Time To Read" programs placed by NCLR work through Project Second Chance programs, which are discussed next, or as stand-alone reading projects for youth.)

The Project Success core academic curriculum is cross-curricular and uses Law-Related Education as a vehicle for improving students' oral language and analytic and reasoning skills. Through a partnership with the Constitutional Rights Foundation, a special set of materials has been developed for use in EXCEL projects. Evidence that Law-Related Education has a positive influence on delinquency reduction also makes the program popular with communities which have identified delinquency, drug use, and gang activity as major concerns for youth of this age.

The core curriculum uses a thematic approach and also makes use of problem-solving exercises developed for the project by the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Students also participate in the De Orilla a Orilla student writing project, an approach recognized as effective by the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment. Via computers or via mail, sites are matched with "sister" sites and regularly exchange materials and conduct projects together. Computers provided by Apple computers greatly help this effort.

Overall, career education is to be

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addressed by involving as many volunteers in the program as possible—either as subject matter tutors, guest speakers, or mentors for students in specific fields. Groups are free to select their own materials for personal development. This year's seven sites were trained to use Quest International's *Skills for Adolescence* and report good progress with these materials.

Sites for Project Success this program year include Harvest America, Garden City, Kansas; El Centro de Servicios Sociales, Lorain, Ohio; Council for the Spanish Speaking, Stockton, California; Mujeres Latinas de Stanislaus, Modesto, California; El Hogar del Nino, Chicago, Illinois; Nebraska Association of Farmworkers, North Platte, Nebraska; Michigan Economics for Human Development, Lansing, Michigan; and Siete del Norte, Embudo, New Mexico, and Rochester City Schools, Rochester, New York.

Project Second Chance

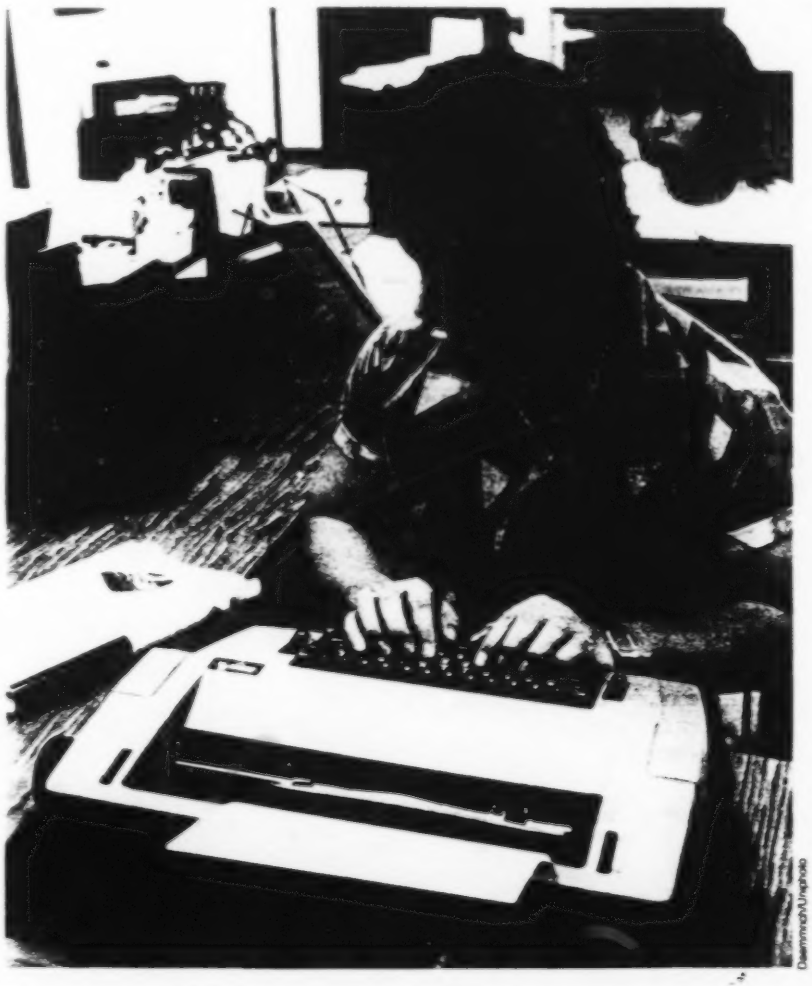
Project Second Chance was designed to address the needs of the large proportion of Hispanic youth who have already left school without diplomas. Because funding sources for these types of endeavors vary tremendously, the program may operate in a variety of ways. Local programs may be full- or part-time, and with or without job training and placement. However, the basic aim of the project is to provide educational services and counseling so that youth can either gain a high school equivalency certificate or diploma and continue on with some type of education—traditional post-secondary or specialized training.

As with Project Success, Project Second Chance programs must deal with the fact that most students will be products of low-level curriculum tracks and, consequently, will need assistance in developing higher-order thinking and reading skills and problem-solving abilities. The curricular materials and approaches outlined for Project Success are available to these projects, plus whatever other materials and subjects are required by local accrediting agencies. Several computer-assisted instructional curricula are also being evaluated for possible use by these programs as one facet of the program.

Project Second Chance sites include the Gulf Coast Council of La Raza, Corpus Christi, Texas, and the Association for the Advancement of Mexican Americans, Houston, Texas.

Parents as Partners

The Parents as Partners model recognizes that Hispanic parents are their children's most important teachers but often lack the skills necessary to help their children progress successfully through



Hispanics' enrollment in vocational education tracks is disproportionately high, limiting their post-secondary educational opportunities.

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MEETING THE NEEDS OF HISPANIC CUSTOMERS

On December 6, 1989, leaders from eight national Hispanic organizations and eight investor-owned electric utility organizations convened in Washington, DC, to strategize and develop priorities on "Meeting the Needs of Hispanic Customers."

While exploring how best to meet these needs, the group developed and agreed upon two broad premises: First, utilities' obligation to provide electricity in a safe, reliable, and economically and environmentally acceptable manner is the same for Hispanic customers as it is for all other customers. Second, utilities' obligation to serve Hispanic Americans should take into account that they are the youngest, fastest growing major U.S. population group and that they are more likely than non-Hispanics to drop out of school, to be unemployed or underemployed, and to live in poverty.

"Although these premises appear simple, they are really key," according to Alex Wilson, Edison Electric Institute's Representative for External Programs. "They capture an essential paradox—for electric utilities, Hispanics are both the same as every other customer group and different than every other customer group. If their needs are to be met, the Hispanic community and the electric utility industry must work together, which is why this meeting was so valuable."

The participating utilities, which were representative of companies with a large Hispanic customer base, were Arizona Public Service Company, Consolidated Edison Company of New York, Florida Power & Light, Northeast Utilities, Pacific Gas & Electric Company, Potomac Electric Power Company, and Wisconsin Electric Power Company. The meeting was sponsored by Edison Electric Institute.

The eight Hispanic organizations reflected the cultural diversity and varied concerns of the national Hispanic community. Attending were representatives of the Cuban American National Council, Hispanic Association on Corporate Responsibility, Latin American Manufacturers Association, League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), LULAC National Educational Services Centers, National Council of La Raza, National Puerto Rican Coalition, and the United States Catholic Conference-Secretariat for Hispanic Affairs.

By the end of the day, the participants also agreed to establish a formal process to continue their dialogue and developed several other recommendations. The complete list of recommendations will be included in a summary of the meeting to be published early this year. For more information, contact Alex Wilson at (202) 778-6585.

school. It provides training and assistance to parents so that they can become active partners in their children's education. The program is a required component of the Academia, Project Success, and Project Second Chance, but it also may be operated as a free-standing program by organizations which do not operate educational programs for children or youth but are interested in parent leadership development.

The program offers a variety of educational seminars to parents, with topics ranging from activities parents can use at home in everyday life to help their children, to developing skills to help parents understand test scores and report cards, school budgets, policy making procedures, and the structure of other entities which influence the quality of life in the community. Because of the need to involve parents in helping children improve math abilities, training has also been provided to demonstration sites on the use of the Family Math approach developed by the Lawrence Hall of Science at the University of California at Berkeley.

This year's Parents as Partners sites include El Centro de Servicios Sociales, Lorain, Ohio; Association House, Chicago, Illinois; Association for the Advancement of Mexican Americans, Houston, Texas; Minnesota Hispanic Education Project, St. Paul, Minnesota; Council for the Spanish Speaking, Stockton, California; Friendly House, Phoenix, Arizona; Commission on Catholic Community Action, Cleveland, Ohio; El Hogar del Nino, Chicago, Illinois; Guadalupe Center, Kansas City, Missouri; Spanish Speaking Unity Council, Oakland, California; Latino Resource Organization, Santa Monica, California; and Harvest America, Garden City, Kansas.

Family Reading Program

The Family Reading Program is designed to help parents support the educational efforts of their children by developing their own literacy skills. Its objectives are to increase English Literacy skills of Hispanic parents with limited English proficiency and to improve their ability to help their children improve their English reading skills.

The Family Reading Program consists of activities which involve parents in producing stories and developing chronicles based on family themes. In most sites Apple computers have been made available to edit, revise, and generate finished stories. Parents then have the opportunity to become acquainted with the uses of the computer while practicing writing skills and creating word lists. The program typically meets five hours per week and parents participate over the course of a school year and summer session.

Family Reading Models are being tested at United Community Center, Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Centro La-

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With the help of Project EXCEL, low-cost, community-based educational models are helping "at risk" students in 42 separate programs at 26 different sites across the country.

tino de San Francisco, San Francisco, California; El Hogar del Nino, Chicago, Illinois; Centro de Accion Social, Pasadena, California; Guadalupe Center, Kansas City, Missouri; KACHA, Topeka, Kansas; Washington State Migrant Council, Sunnyside, Washington; Latino Resource Organization, Santa Monica, California; Michigan Economics for Human Development, Lansing, Michigan, and El Centro de Servicios Sociales, Lorain, Ohio.

The Teacher Support Network

The Teacher Support Network is designed to bring together community resources to provide training and assistance to Hispanic teachers and other teachers working with Hispanic children. The aim of this project is to increase the expectations that these teachers hold for Hispanic students, to strengthen the positive linkages between the teachers and Hispanic communities, and to make them more effective teachers of Hispanic children.

The projects may use a variety of approaches to achieve these aims, including providing workshops for teachers, helping to recruit classroom volunteers, initiating a special mini-grant programs for teacher-generated enrichment programs, and providing recognition for teachers making outstanding efforts. This model is in its second year of demonstration at Association House in Chicago, Illinois.

What's Next

While NCLR continues to work at the national level to advocate systemic reforms and adequate funding for teacher training, parent and adult education, effective school practices and programs, and appropriate programs for at-risk children, NCLR also believes that much change can be effectively initiated through community-generated local projects. To that end, Project EXCEL is designed to demonstrate and evaluate low-cost models which communities can use to help improve educational outcomes for Hispanics. Support comes from a combination of private and public sources.

When the models have been evaluated and refined, the project will disseminate the evaluation findings so that education policy makers can incorporate effective approaches into public and parochial school programs. The project also plans to produce implementation guides and curriculum materials to facilitate the replication of effective models by additional community-based organizations. In this way, NCLR hopes to continue to contribute to the restructuring and reform of public and private school policies and to increase the level of Hispanic community involvement in providing high quality educational services to Hispanic students, their families, and teachers.

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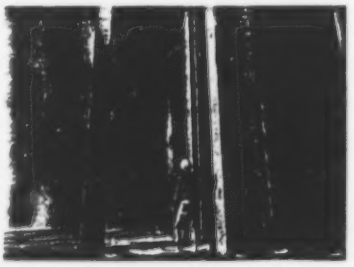
By James D. Watkins



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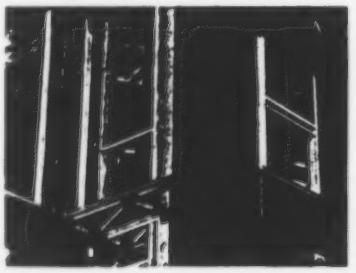
Variations on the economic assumptions in the Electricity Futures Project's reference case provide insights about future U.S. energy requirements.
By Mark A. Boroush and Peter M. Stern



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